AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A dried hydrogel ~~Hydrogels capable of absorbing aqueous fluids~~, prepared by

~~polymerization of~~ polymerizing an olefinically unsaturated carboxylic ~~acids~~ acid or an olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acid compound in a polymerization reaction mixture; ~~derivatives thereof,~~

admixing~~wherefor~~ the polymerization reaction mixture, before, during or after the polymerization and before drying, ~~is admixed~~ with an alkali metal silicate of the general formula I

$$M_2O \times n\ SiO_2 \qquad (I),$$

~~where~~ wherein M is an alkali metal and n is from 0.5 to 4~~, before, during or after the polymerization reaction and before drying and the~~;

thereby obtaining a hydrogel ~~thus obtained is then dried~~ containing a polymer; and

drying said hydrogel at an elevated temperature, to obtain said dried hydrogel.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~admixed with~~ prepared by admixing said alkali metal ~~silicates~~ silicate in ~~amounts~~ an amount of from 0.05% by weight to 100% by weight, reckoned on SiO_2 and based on ~~the~~ a total monomer weight.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~admixed with~~ prepared by admixing said alkali metal ~~silicates~~ silicate in

~~amounts~~ an amount of from 1% by weight to 70% by weight, reckoned on SiO_2 and based on ~~the~~ a total monomer weight.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~wherefor~~ prepared by admixing said hydrogel after said polymerization ~~the acidic addition polymers are neutralized~~ with ~~mixtures~~ a mixture of an alkali metal ~~silicates~~ silicate and an alkali metal ~~hydroxides~~ hydroxide, to thereby neutralize said polymer contained in said hydrogel.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~wherefor~~ prepared by admixing said hydrogel after said polymerization ~~the acidic addition polymers are neutralized~~ with ~~mixtures~~ a mixture of an alkali metal ~~silicates~~ silicate and an alkali metal ~~carbonates~~ carbonate, to thereby neutralize said polymer contained in said hydrogel.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~wherefor the acidic addition polymers are neutralized~~ prepared by neutralizing said polymer contained in said hydrogel to a pH of from 3.5 to 9.0.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~Polymers~~ The dried hydrogel as claimed in claim 1, ~~wherefor the~~ wherein a drying ~~temperatures~~ temperature is ~~are~~ in the range from 40°C to 300°C.

8-9. (Cancelled)

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): ~~The~~ A process for preparing ~~the polymers~~ a dried hydrogel ~~of claim 1~~, comprising:

polymerizing an olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acid or an olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acid compound in a polymerization reaction mixture;

admixing the polymerization reaction mixture, before, during or after the polymerization and before drying, with an alkali metal silicate of the general formula I

$$M_2O \times n\ SiO_2 \qquad (I),$$

wherein M is an alkali metal and n is from 0.5 to 4;

thereby obtaining a hydrogel containing a polymer; and

drying said hydrogel at an elevated temperature, to obtain said dried hydrogel

~~by admixing the polymerization mixture of the polymerization of olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acids or derivatives thereof with an alkali metal silicate of the formula I before, during or after the polymerization reaction and before drying and then drying the thus obtained hydrogel at elevated temperature~~.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): ~~Use of the polymers of claim 1~~ A method for absorbing aqueous solutions, dispersions and emulsions, comprising:

contacting the dried hydrogel according to claim 1 with an aqueous solution, dispersion or emulsion.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): ~~Use of the polymers of claim 1 for producing articles~~ An article, comprising:

the dried hydrogel according to Claim 1;

said article being capable of ~~for~~ absorbing an aqueous ~~fluids~~ fluid.

13. (New) The dried hydrogel according to claim 1 which is capable of absorbing an aqueous fluid.

14. (New) The dried hydrogel according to claim 1, wherein said olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acid is selected from the group consisting of acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, crotonic acid, 2-acryl-amido-2-methylpropanesulfonic acid, 2-acryl-amido-2-methylpropanephosphonic acid, vinylphosphonic acid and mixtures thereof; and

wherein said olefinically unsaturated carboxylic acid compound is selected from the group consisting of a vinylphosphonic monoester, a salt of a vinylphosphonic monoester, acrylamide, N-vinylamide, and mixtures thereof.

15. (New) The dried hydrogel according to claim 1, which contains no crosslinker.

16. (New) The dried hydrogel according to claim 1, wherein M in formula (I) is sodium.

17. (New) The dried hydrogel according to claim 1, wherein M in formula (I) is potassium.